

Mysterious Ways

A Cyberzine for Queer Pagan Men.

Summer / Fall 2025
Volume 6, Issue 2

Theme this Issue: Under the Pagan Moon

Welcome to the latest issue of Mysterious Ways! When I came up with the theme for this issue “Under the Pagan Moon,” I wanted to highlight something positive for us in the midst of our current political and personal struggles. Attending Pagan events and gatherings is a lifeline to many queer Pagan people. Often, it’s that one time of year when we get to be among people who totally understand who we are, what we believe, and what we’re going through. These events provide us with a sense of connection and also a chance to immerse ourselves in Pagan and Queer cultures. It’s a chance to get away from the mundane world for a while. When we connect, we make a different and unique kind of magick and we affirm the wholeness of the many unique parts of ourselves.

- Mel Mystery



Image from the Wikimedia Commons

The Moon represents intuition, dreams, and the subconscious. It can suggest a time of uncertainty, mystery, and trusting one’s inner wisdom.



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Special Thanks

Special thanks to all who contributed articles , poetry, and art this issue.

AI images in this issue provided by Gemini.

Events and Gatherings

Brotherhood by the Bog was held in-person, April 19, 2025

By Mel Mystery

The Brotherhood by the Bog retreat for Pagan men of all paths, orientations, and backgrounds took place on April 19, 2025 at First Landing State Park in Virginia Beach. The theme was “Divination and the Masculine.” Rather than a full weekend camping retreat, this year we decided to have a single day retreat. Speakers included Nightshade who led a hike seeking nature signs and omens, Norsewyk Grimnir who presented a workshop on Norse Runes, and Mel Mystery who led a workshop on the Druid Ogham where folks had the opportunity to create their own Ogham sticks to take home with them.

Other activities included a divination play table where participants brought their favorite divination tools and techniques to share with others and various conversations throughout the day. Lunch and dinner were provided to those who attended.



Norsewyk explains the Runes to David.

For more information about Brotherhood by the Bog:

<https://www.olympuscampgroundresort.com/brotherhood-by-the-bog-main/>

Virtual Brotherhood Beyond Borders to be held, November 14-16, 2025

By Mel Mystery

Virtual Brotherhood Beyond Borders is scheduled for the weekend of November 14-16, 2025. Brotherhood Beyond Borders is the new name for our virtual retreat which was formerly known as Virtual Brotherhood by the Bog. The name change was made to better distinguish between the in-person Brotherhood by the Bog and our virtual retreat. Brotherhood by the Bog has traditionally taken place as a camping or cabin retreat in Virginia, but was moved online during and shortly after Covid. Due to the popularity and the opportunity to reach a larger audience, we have wanted to continue offering an annual virtual Pagan men’s retreat but we also needed to better differentiate this from the in-person retreat.

The theme for the upcoming virtual Brotherhood Beyond Borders retreat is “Magick for Troubled Times.” We are in the process of lining up speakers and presenters old and new for the weekend. The event is free to attend. Additional information will be shared on our webpage and in our Facebook Group as it becomes available.

For more information about Brotherhood Beyond Borders:

<https://www.olympuscampgroundresort.com/brotherhood-beyond-borders/>

Retreats Restructured / Arcadia moved to Spring 2026

By Mel Mystery

The In-person Arcadia Retreat for Queer Pagan men has been moved to Spring 2026. Originally, it was scheduled for Fall 2026. This is part of a general restructuring of the Arcadia, Brotherhood by the Bog, and Brotherhood Beyond Borders retreats. The In-person Arcadia and Brotherhood by the Bog retreats will now alternate every other spring. The in-person Brotherhood by the Bog for Pagan men of all paths, backgrounds, and orientations recently took place in April 2025 and will return again in-person in 2027. The associated virtual retreat, formerly known as "Virtual Brotherhood by the Bog," has been renamed "Brotherhood Beyond Borders." The Virtual Brotherhood Beyond Borders is now set to take place each Fall, usually in early to mid-November. The reasoning behind these changes is to assist with marketing and name recognition of each individual retreat.

The next in-person Arcadia is scheduled for the Spring of 2026 and is expected to take place at a campground in Cumberland, Virginia. We are seeking proposals for a theme, workshops, and guest presenters.

For more information about Arcadia:

<https://www.olympuscampgroundresort.com/arcadia-main/>



A few photos from Arcadia 2024. Photos taken by Eric Eldritch.

Brotherhood Beyond Borders

A Virtual Retreat for Pagan Men of all paths, backgrounds, and orientations.

"Magick for Troubled Times"

November 14-16, 2025

As always, our virtual retreats are FREE to attend!

For more information:

<https://www.olympuscampgroundresort.com/brotherhood-beyond-borders/>

Something to Think About

LEST WE FORGET

by η Δωδώνα Όράκλος

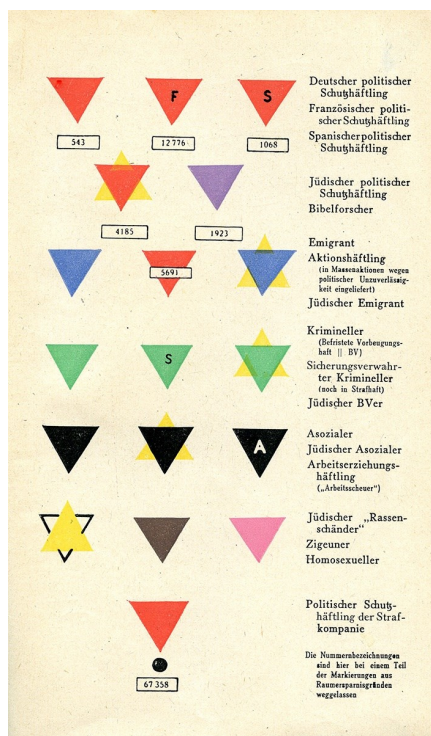
There can be no better way to begin an article on the treatment of gay men, and other non-Jews, by the Nazi party before and during the Second World War, and also their treatment by the so called 'enlightened' after the WW2, than to quote from the Foreword written by Laura Antoniou, in the book 'Resistance: The LGBT Fight Against Fascism in WWII' by Avery Cassell. Although this was written in New York in 2018, it still resonates the fears of today:

"Right now, the world feels like an awful place; there is a hateful dictator wanna-be in the White House Immigrant families are being separated, and hundreds of their children have disappeared in the process. more and more acts of violent racism and homophobia are splashed across the headlines. Every day feels like we are facing another wave of attacks on civil liberties, democracy, justice, and common decency.....I feel lost in despair and existential dread."

She is speaking of the then, and present, incumbent and it seems not much has changed. Indeed, if anything, it has got worse. So few either know the history of 1930s and 1940s Europe, nor care a fig, as they think it could not happen again. But the fact remains that history continually repeats itself, which is why the UK on Remembrance Day repeats the saying, 'Lest We Forget' as an eternal reminder of what happens in dark times and why we all have a responsibility to fight for liberty and freedom for all, and not just the few.

Project 2025 reads like a reprint of Mein Kampf and every day more pages are put into effect. There is no difference to what happened in Germany from the time Hitler took power, to cheers from the crowds, much as MAGA cheer Donald Trump. But the prospects of having a man do anything he wants, without restraint, can be seen in the carnage in Britain, Europe, Pearl Harbor and many other places during WW2. It can be seen in the Killing Fields of Pol Pot in Cambodia, and the madness of Caligula and Nero in Ancient Rome. So it is high time for us all to read, enquire and wise up because if this is not done, we are as culpable as the dictators.

Nearly everyone knows that those of the Jewish faith suffered horrendously in the death camps of wartime Europe. You cannot be but moved by photographs of emaciated bodies of the survivors or the mass graves of the murdered. The piles of fillings and stolen items of the victims. However, many will not know that it was not just Jews who were sent to concentration camps. Like the Jews, these other groups were forced to wear color coded triangles to identify them:



'Asocials' (Roma, Nonconformists, Vagrants, Mentally and Physically Disabled, Pacifists, Sex Workers, Lesbians [seen differently from Homosexuals]) wore black or brown triangles.

Jehovah Witnesses wore purple.

Political Prisoners wore red (resistance fighters, social democrats, liberals, socialists, communists, anarchists, trade unionists, Freemasons)

Criminals wore green.

Foreign forced laborers and emigrants (please take note) wore blue.

Homosexuals wore a pink triangle (this included: bisexuals, male prostitutes and transvestites)

So it can be seen that a whole rainbow of others the Nazi party did not like were also abused like the Jews, but are hardly ever remembered now apart from the odd Pink Triangle memorial. This article has a focus on Homosexuals, but we must never forget others who were persecuted.

Paragraph 175 in the German Law Code continued from the time of the 1871 German Empire through to 1994 when it was finally dropped. The original clause read:

' Unnatural sexual acts committed between persons of the male sex, or by humans with animals, is punishable with imprisonment; a loss of civil rights may also be sentenced '

Under the German Empire, this was interpreted narrowly and evidence that two men had 'intercourse-like' acts had to be proven. Therefore it was very difficult to get convictions and this explains the Bohemian feel of pre-1935 Berlin as exemplified in the works of Christopher Isherwood and Stephen Spender. However 175 was revised by the Nazi regime in 1935. Now it read:

' A man who commits sexual acts with another man, or allows himself to be misused for sexual acts by a man, will be punished with prison.'

This widened the number of 'acts' punishable and so increased the number of men who could be charged and convicted. Paragraph 175a covered coercion to have sex, initiating sexual relations with a male subordinate or employee, sex with a minor (under 21) and male homosexual prostitution. Sentences were up to 10 years hard labor in prison and both parties were punished equally. Paragraph 175b covered bestiality.

The SS leader Heinrich Himmler led enforcing this revised code on those he called a '*public scourge*'. In 1936 he created the Reich Central Office for combatting Homosexuality and Abortion. They worked with the Gestapo and even lewd behavior (meaning not even physical contact) was enough to get you charged. The Nazis made upwards of 100,000 arrests and approximately 53,400 convictions. Although many men were sent to prison, it is estimated that between 5000 and 15000 were sent to concentration camps. Strangely, Himmler believed that this group of homosexuals were dangerous simply because they could (in his mind) seduce heterosexual men. A bit much considering that the butch Arian iconic male would surely have been immune to such advances? Also, a leading Nazi, Ernst Röhm, once a friend of Hitler, was an openly gay man !! A quote from 'The Pink Triangle' by Richard Plant sums up how fascism radically changed Germany: ***'The Third Reich wiped out the humanization and democratization of jurisprudence that the enlightenment had brought to Germany.'*** This is particularly important to take in now.

Do not think that it was simply detective based sleuthing that resulted in charges being brought. The police used far sinister methods such as denunciations, raids and torture. Psychological and physical torture was used to extract confessions and the naming of lovers etc.

Obviously gay men were sent to many of the same concentration camps as other, non gay, people. However for the purposes here, only the Buchenwald concentration camp will be used to give an idea what happened next. In Buchenwald, as in many other concentration camps, homosexuals were segregated within specific barracks and work details where they could receive enhanced maltreatment. This was easy because gays were most often hated by even other inmates for their homosexuality. From 1938 homosexuals were assigned to 'the punishment company'. This meant hard labor in the stone quarry and being denied any possible transfer to a better group. Homosexuals formed the greatest percentage (by relative numbers) of those sent to the extermination camps of Mauthausen, Natzweiler and Gross-Rosen. In January 1944 most homosexuals were sent on to the Dora murder camp and few survived.

There were sadistic, homophobic guards at Buchenwald. One in particular was Herzog, a former soldier in the Foreign Legion. He zested blood thirstiness in his treatment of homosexuals. It was known at the quarry that he would beat a man till blood flowed but kept going till the man's fate was beyond remedy. If a man, exhausted or injured from the dangerous work, was unable to continue, he would be thrown like garbage into a cart and tipped on a pile of rocks. Herzog would often stamp him to death with his boots or drowned him by forcing water down his throat. If revived by the latter, Herzog just trampled the man to death. Often a ruse was used to trick homosexuals into running across a defined

line in the quarry so they could be shot for apparently trying to escape.

Another torture endured by homosexuals at the camp was medical experiments. A Dane; Major Doctor Vaernet carried out a series of experiments as a 'cure' for homosexuality. A procedure to implant a synthetic hormone into the right side of the groin was supposed to change the sex drive. He also used castration; in this case 15 men were used of which 2 died from the operation. The use of human guinea pigs in this way was an abomination and crime against humanity. Vaernet was initially detained after the war but he falsely claimed a heart problem and was released. He escaped to Argentina and Denmark declined to extradite him. He died in 1965 and the files on him in the Danish National Archives were sealed until 2025.

In many ways the persecutor was treated better than his victims in the post war period. Of all former detainees in nazi concentration camps, only homosexuals were not granted compensation. It was said that as Para. 175 existed before Hitler, that homosexuals 'deserved' imprisonment for their acts. The bigotry of society was such that homosexuality was still a stigma, despite the suffering of gay victims. Same sex activity was not decriminalized in both East and West Germany until 1968-1969. Same sex marriage was only legalized in 2017. It is a salutary fact that, much like the Jews, homosexuals have been the brunt of societal and religious oppression for centuries, and, it is all too likely that a new phase of this has begun with the rise of the far right in all its guises !

Before I end this article I wish to share the story of a gay man who suffered under the nazis. Wilhelm Heckmann, who was born in Altena, North Rhine-Westphalia, was a musician, singer and accordionist. He went on tour in the 1920s and 30s and was known as the 'Rhineland Tenor'.

After Hitler came to power in 1933, a series of laws were passed to control artistic expression. In all forms, art was designated as degenerate or approved. Hitler liked traditional art (hence the Wagner obsession) and hated modern music, especially American Jazz, which he associated with black American music. Here Heckmann was fortunate as he did not play modern or Jewish written pieces. He even received accolades for his talent. However, he was always in danger as a gay man. In July 1937 he was arrested by the gestapo under Para. 175. Having had a prior arrest, he was sent to the Dachau concentration camp and in 1939 transferred to Mauthausen. He was assigned to quarry work but then transferred to play as a musician in the Gypsy Orchestra. Then he was ordered by Himmler to form a Mauthausen Camp Orchestra playing whilst the SS caroused and had sex. It was only music that kept him sane. It was not a light alternative. Wilhelm was still brutalized by the guards and reviled by other inmates because he was gay. Also, his family back in Altena were staunch supporters of Hitler, his mother even worked with the Hitler Youth. It is noteworthy that in present day America, many families of gay men are staunch supporters of Trump !!



Wilhelm Heckmann

Wilhelm was liberated by American soldiers on 5th May 1945. Between 122,766 and 320,000 people met their death in Mauthausen at the hands of the nazis. From his treatment Wilhelm had nerve damage which prevented him resuming his work as a musician. It was far too painful to play an accordion any more. In 1954 he applied under the German Reparation policy for those who suffered under nazi rule. He was denied compensation as he had been convicted under Para. 175 as a homosexual. Compensation was not in fact granted under such applications until 2016 !!! Wilhelm died in 1995 at the age of 97, having been let down by German societal cruelty in not recognising the fact that all who suffered under Hitler's regime should have been compensated and their suffering acknowledged.

'Lest We Forget'.

Make it never happen again !

Remove blindness to fascism, even in our midst, and fight it with every fibre of your being.

Signs of the Times



Between the Worlds

A spiritual gathering for celebrating all aspects of the queer male spectrum

September 8—13, 2025

www.betweentheworlds.org/



The First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution protects the right to protest, guaranteeing freedom of speech, assembly, and petition. This means individuals can gather peacefully, express their views through protest, and petition the government for redress of grievances without government interference. [🔗](#)



KNOW YOUR PROTEST RIGHTS:

1. **You don't need a permit to protest in response to breaking news and you don't need a permit to march in the streets or along sidewalks,** as long as you're not obstructing traffic or access to buildings.
2. When you are lawfully present in any public space, **you have the right to photograph anything in plain view, including federal buildings and the police.**
3. If you believe your rights have been violated, when you can, **write down everything you remember, get contact information for witnesses, and take photographs of any injuries.**
4. **If you get stopped by the police, ask if you're free to go. If they say yes, calmly walk away.**
5. **If you get arrested,** you have a right to ask why. Otherwise, say you wish to remain silent and ask for a lawyer immediately. **Don't sign, say or agree to anything without a lawyer present.**
6. If you get stopped by a member of the military or any law enforcement officer at a protest, **you have the right to remain silent or to tell them that you'll only answer questions in the presence of an attorney** — no matter your citizenship or immigration status.

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

ACLU

Submit your Stories from the Resistance!!!

‘Stories from the Resistance’ is a new and continuing section for Mysterious Ways and will remain as long as the need continues.

I encourage readers to share their stories. How has the current U.S. presidential administration or Rethugli-can leaders in your state affected you or others in your life? What strategies would you like to share to help others cope and survive? Are you aware of policies and initiatives that might affect the LGBTQ+ or the Pagan communities? Would you like to provide facts to counter misinformation? Do you have thoughts, opinions, or commentary to share? Have you participated in protests, vigils, rallies, or other actions against this administration and its policies? Have you participated in magick (whether alone or in groups) to counter the administration and its destructive policies?

Submission deadline is December 15, 2025.

Book Reviews

The Druidic Art of Divination

A review by Mel Mystery.

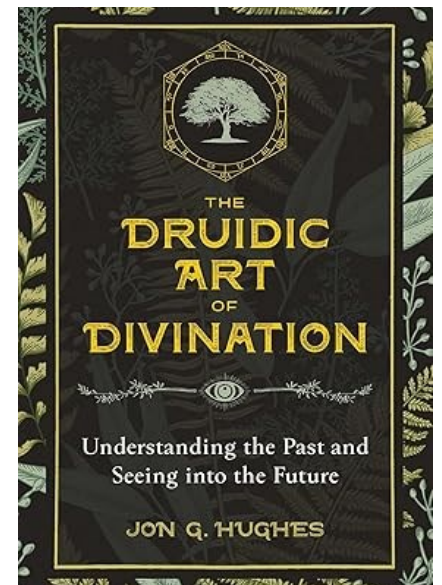
I recently read **The Druidic Art of Divination: Understanding the Past and Seeing into the Future** by Jon G. Hughes.

The author offers a unique take on Druidic divination inspired by his hereditary Druid tradition going back five generations. Unfortunately, any benefit to be gained by this unique perspective is negated by other factors within his writing. First and foremost is the author’s obvious disdain for Druids of other traditions – especially modern neopagan Druids – which is bluntly expressed in various parts of the book. From the author’s writing, you would think that he must believe that his tradition goes back unchanged and unadulterated thousands of years back to the times of the ancient proto-druids – rather than only five generations. Five generations is still impressive, if only the author were not so patronizing that his tradition and practices are the only true and pure way to be a Druid.

The practices in the book are also not practical for the average reader. Unless you have the time and skills to distill your own essential oils, polish a slate stone to a mirror finish, or brew your own mead, this book is best passed over.

Many of the ingredients suggested for botanicals and brews are also not practical. The author suggests some “frequently used” botanicals, but then suggests that those same ingredients are “relatively rare.” He goes on to remind folks that some of the mead ingredients are also controlled or even illegal to possess and use in many localities.

The book does have its positives though. The divination processes explained could easily be adapted to more accessible divination tools – such as black scrying mirrors (rather than polished slate). The book is also a good introduction to distilling essential oils from plants, brewing mead, and crafting tools like wands and staves. Of course, I purchased the book to learn about divination techniques.



Under the Pagan Moon

Is it a stretch of the imagination?
A suspension of disbelief?
Persistence of memory?
Or just a need for some release?

Did I see you under foreign stars
like I do in all my dreams?
Did I know you in some time before?
Is it just a fantasy?

Did we dance among the ring stones
beneath the Pagan moon?
Are the promises of past lives
coming true?

Is it random chance?
Or destiny?
This curious connection.

What drives these dreams of mine
in this strange and new direction?

Did we make some sacred vow?
Did we speak the ancient words?
Did the gods burn fire across the sky
to signify they heard?

Did we dance among the ring stones
beneath the Pagan moon?
Are the promises of past lives
coming true?

Did we stand you and me
hand in hand underneath the Pagan moon?
Are the promises we made there
coming true?

So stretch your imagination.
Suspend your disbelief.
Look at me through the eyes of memory.
Tell me what you see.

Can souls fly through the maze of time
on the wings of what we said?
Tell me are these feeling real.
Is it all just in my head?



Did we stand beneath the midnight sky
where the Pagan moon once shown?
Why does being with you feel
like coming home?

Did we dance among the ring stones
beneath the Pagan moon?
Are the promises of past lives
coming true?

Did we stand?
Did we dance while the Pagan moon
shown down from above?

Where we there?
Was it real?
Was it love?

Where we there?
Was it real?
Is it true?

— Enigma Dou

Our Modern and Ancient Connections

by Mel Mystery.

When I came up with the theme for this issue “Under the Pagan Moon,” I wanted to highlight something positive for us in the midst of our current political and personal struggles. I had hoped for more submissions of people’s experiences and revelations from various Pagan and Queer gatherings. I knew that audience participation could vary. Since I did not receive your stories, I’m sharing mine from gatherings that I attended in past years.

Attending Pagan events and gatherings is a lifeline to many queer Pagan people. I remember attending my first major queer men’s Pagan spiritual gathering “Coph Nia” in 2014. I had this feeling of coming home to my own tribe of people—people who understand what it is to be a gay man practicing a Pagan spiritual path. When I attended Between the Worlds* in 2017, I heard many returning attendees speak about how the annual event was the highlight of their year. They’d travel from all corners of the country every September to experience bonds of brotherhood and magick with other Pagan men who love men. The need for connection was and is so important. I’ve heard stories from other queer Pagan friends about other events. One friend talked with much affection about Queer camp at Pagan Spirit Gathering. And many Pagans of all orientations and identities attend various conferences and gatherings (large and small) that hold great significance to them— Stone and Stang, Witch Camp, Starwood Festival, Mystic South, Paganicon, and many others.

Coph Nia held its last gathering in 2015, and while I’ve hoped to get back to Between the Worlds since 2017, both distance and finances have kept me from returning. My hope has been to return but it’s just not been in the cards. Between the Worlds has moved to Pennsylvania, which is much closer to where I live than Ohio, so I’m hopeful I’ll be able to go back in the near future—but not this year. My time, energy, and finances these past several years have been focused on more pressing things at home—everything from home and car repairs to participating in local events. And, of course, the current year is fraught with political and economic uncertainty under the current government administration.

Besides my own personal responsibilities, my focus has largely been on the two Pagan men’s retreats I’m involved in planning— Brotherhood by the Bog (for Pagan men of all paths, backgrounds, and orientations) and Arcadia (for Queer Pagan men). These tend to be small weekend retreats rather than big gatherings. I feel like there is a great need for these types of events (large and small) — especially the Queer Pagan men’s events. As queer men, we’ve been told by many mainstream religions that we’re sick, sinful, or not enough. Paganism is generally accepting and affirming in a way that the mainstream religions are not. We also get to see our authentic selves in the diversity of Pagan deities and spirits who themselves have varied sexual and gender orientations and identities represented in many different cultures. And sometimes, even within the Pagan community, we have the need to come together not only as Pagan, but as Queer men so we can focus on Queer men’s space, ritual, and magick.

I’d really like to see more Queer Pagan men’s groups and gatherings all around the country and all around the world. When we connect, we make a different and unique kind of magick and we affirm the wholeness of the many unique parts of ourselves.

* Just a note that there appear to be two Pagan gatherings that currently call themselves “Between the Worlds”. I’m referring to the Between the Worlds gathering specifically for Pagan men-who-love men that has been running since 2002. The other “Between the Worlds” appears to be a not specifically Queer or LTBTQ+ metaphysical conference run by different organizers.

Stone and Stang **A Spiritual Gathering for Pagan Men-Who-Love-Men**

Check their webpage for the latest updates on retreats and workshops hosted by the Un-named Path.

<https://unnamedpath.org/stone-stang/>

Coph Nia: A Gathering that Ended Way Too Soon

A review transcribed and adapted from my September 2014 podcast.

By Mel Mystery

In August 2014, I attended Coph Nia – a spiritual gathering for gay and bisexual Pagan men held at Four Quarters Interfaith Sanctuary in Artemas, Pennsylvania. When I attended, I knew that I was going to write a review of the event, but what I did not realize was how difficult it would be to put my experiences into words. The experience was profound and had so many layers of meaning. Ironically, or perhaps poetically, the event might even be considered a rite of passage* for myself as well as others – especially first-time participants and first-time presenters. It had all the elements necessary to fit the rite of passage criteria – separation from the mundane world, a period of liminality, and a return to the mundane world with gifts, knowledge, skills, and experiences to share with our respective communities.



Participants at the 2014 Coph Nia peeking out from behind the standing stones.

Coph Nia has been going on for about three years now. This is the first year the event has been held at Four Quarters, and it is my understanding that the event will be held there again next year in early August (2015). The event is produced by a gay and bi men's spiritual organization called Ordo Aeternus Vovin or OAV for short. OAV is an initiatory order that follows many of the teachings of Aleister Crowley, the Law of Thelema, and ceremonial magick. The OAV follows a sex positive and queer-centric spiritual path. One of the primary deities of the OAV is the ancient Sumerian goddess Inanna – a goddess of war and sexual love. Inanna was worshipped by a group of gender variant male priests called the Kugarru. A temple for Inanna is erected yearly at Coph Nia.

Four Quarters was an appropriate and beautiful setting for the gathering. Located in the rural foothills of Pennsylvania, Four Quarters is located on 150 acres of land bordered on three sides by a river. Some of the features and landmarks include a stone circle, a labyrinth, a swimming hole, a faerie cairn, a couple of drum circle areas, sweat lodges, and various buildings including bathroom and shower facilities, and the dining pavilion. Each year over Labor Day weekend more standing stones are added to the stone circle at an event called "Stones Rising." Throughout the campground there are a myriad of devotional altars with gifts to their respective gods, goddesses, and other spirits. Mostly the land is set up for tent camping but there is a fairly new dormitory. The Radical Faeries have a standing camp at Four Quarters, and I got a personal tour from one of its members. Four Quarters provided a meal plan for Coph Nia attendees and provided three delicious meals each day of the event – providing both meat and vegetarian / vegan options.

The theme of this year's Coph Nia was "Periculum" which means "risk" or "danger" and was used in the context of risks and challenges related to initiation and seeking enlightenment. Altogether, there were about 30 people who attended the gathering. Ages of participants ranged from their 20s on up to at least their 60s.

Featured presenters at this year's Coph Nia included Steve Kenson, Erick DuPree, Gaffer that Harp Guy, and myself (Mel Mystery). Steve Kenson is a founder of the Temple of Witchcraft and lead minster of the Gemini ministry of the Temple in charge of its communication networks, its Queer spirit ministry, and the Trickster / questioning aspect of its structure. Steve presented workshops on Pagans and role-playing, the medicine and mysteries of the Queer spirit, chaos magick, Pagan institutions, and spirit work.

Erick DuPree is a popular Pagan blogger and writer. He studies Tantra and Dharma Paganism. Eric has two upcoming books – **The Hero Within: Reframing Masculinity with the Goddess** and his other book **Finding the Masculine in Goddess' Spiral: Men in Ritual, Community, and Service to the Goddess**. Erick led workshops on the role of men in the Goddess movement, transformational breathing, and he led evening meditations and chanting.

Gaffer that Harp Guy is a semiotician, historian, ethnographer, and harper. He has leant his talents to both teaching and promoting human rights through music and song. Gaffer hosted an evening harp concert for the gathering.

I already mentioned that I conducted three workshops on rites of passage – “A Rite of Passage Overview”, “Conversations on Gay and Bi Men’s Rites of Passage”, and an interactive “Create a Rite of Passage” workshop.

There were many other talented workshop presenters including members of the OAV, a member of the DC Radial Faeries, and other assorted individuals.

Other fun events and workshops included “Queer-aoke” (Queer karaoke), a masked ball and sensual feast, tantric massage, fire circle etiquette, invoking our Gods, and drumming and dancing around the fire. There were a myriad of rituals throughout the week including rituals by the OAV, a ritual reenacting the goddess Inanna stealing the blueprints of life from Enki, a ritual exploring ecstatic ritual techniques, and a Hecate ritual. The OAV opening ritual included a crowning of the festival king and the main ritual celebrated the mysteries of the dying and rising god that involved symbolically consuming the god’s blood and semen in the form of wine and pomegranate seeds.

There were so many great workshops and activities that I don’t think my description is doing them justice. It’s just one of those things where you had to be there for. There were many sub-themes that ran through the event. This included a sense of community and connection among all those who attended. I personally felt a greater connection and resonance with the people there than I normally do with those in the gay community itself or those in the Pagan community itself. Somehow my non-gay Pagan friends and my non-Pagan gay friends don’t resonate with me or understand me, or me them, in the way that I did with the people at this gay, Pagan gathering – not that my friends don’t try.

Most of the event was upbeat and happy, but there were times to share deeper feelings and frustrations – both as individuals and in groups. Many people’s experiences resonated with me – either where I am now in life or at some other point in my life. The sharing helped me not to feel so alone in my experiences, and I’m sure it helped others as well. Many people had the opportunity to open up in a way they normally haven’t been able to. Some had breakthroughs and some learned new skills they didn’t know they had. Perhaps because my workshops were on rites of passage, I saw many people (including myself) in need of rites of passage.

Challenges for people included individuals feeling stuck in life and wanting better or to do what brings them meaning while stuck in a bad job or other trying circumstances that prevent them from reaching their full potential. Some were reluctant to embrace their age – especially those middle-aged and older. There were feelings of mortality, the waning of health as one grows older, concerns about caring for loved ones who are losing their health, and sadness at the loss of loved ones. Some individuals cited feeling lonely in a world full of people – not being able to let down walls of trust to let other people in. Others felt that no matter how comfortable they are with their sexuality personally, that they are being judged or excluded from family and peers, or that somehow they aren’t good enough because of their sexuality. They... perhaps I should say we... are all good enough and beautiful people. I know all these feelings and I want those who expressed them and felt them to know that they are not alone.

Another theme that came up throughout the week was a recognition of the countercultural history of the LGBTQ+ movement and a feeling that the current movement has become too mainstream. There was a time when our movement challenged the basic assumptions about marriage and now our community has embraced marriage as a goal. Gay community spaces are waning as more people meet online and use apps like Grindr. We used to be about equality for all, but in many ways our movement has become insular and forgotten about others fighting for civil and human rights. Good things were also noted like how LGBTQ+ folks are coming out younger and how younger people are more accepting.

It was a great event, and I was so happy to meet so many genuine people who shared common experiences and beliefs.

*I was a guest presenter at this event, and I presented three workshops on gay men’s rites of passage.

Between the Worlds 2017

by Mel Mystery.

Reprinted from Issue #1

I attended the Between the Worlds Gathering for Queer Pagan men the week of September 11-16, 2017. Although I've known about this event for a long time, this was the first time I've actually attended. 2017 marked Between the Worlds' 16th gathering. Somewhere between 80 and 100 people attended.

Between the Worlds is held at Wisteria campground in Southern Ohio. The campground itself was very nice. It had a labyrinth, stone circle, faerie shrine, ancestor mound, and other similar land features. The campground runs a coffee shop and provides meal plans to the Between the World community. The food was decent, and they offered vegetarian options. The only real complaint I have about the campground itself is the lack of toilet facilities. Like many Pagan campgrounds and gatherings Porta-Potties were the only amenity for doing your business. I was happy though that the

campground did have shower facilities with hot water. The availability of showers made the outdoor experience bearable. Between the Worlds is hosted by the Green Faerie Grove of Columbus, Ohio. Green Faerie Grove is a Pagan brotherhood of Queer Men that provides a safe place for gay, bisexual, and transgender men to explore alternative spiritual beliefs and traditions. In addition to Green Faerie Grove, a group known as the Brotherhood of the Spectrum Blade provides security, health, safety, and counseling services at the gathering.

Every year, a different deity is chosen to be the patron for the gathering and each year offers different guest presenters. This year's patron deity was Agni, the Vedic and Hindu god of fire. Agni is represented as fire, lightning, and the sun. Keynote speaker for the event was Kirk Thomas, former Archdruid of the Druid organization ADF. Thomas was a delight. He brought his knowledge, experience, and wit to the gathering. In his keynote speech, he talked about fear and how we live in a culture of fear. He challenged folks to confront their fears and even provided an activity to allow folks to confront a fear.

Because of the size of the gathering, the community has separated its camps into groups that reminded me of cabins at a summer camp. The most prominent of these groups is called BOOF. The name is an acronym for Brotherhood of Old Farts. This is the party camp for folks over 40. They are big on champagne. BOOF hosts an annual cocktail contest, and they were also the primary group involved in the production of the Between the Worlds Players' annual play.

The second major camping group is called the "Zoo." This is the place where those with animal totems or other animal associations camp. Apparently, there was once a long lost third camp that no longer exists at the gathering.

The men attending Between the Worlds were of all ages, paths, body types, and varying degrees of masculinity and femininity. There was also some representation of folks of color and non-European ethnicity. Some of the attendees were non-Pagan partners and boyfriends of Pagan men in attendance. Rather than calling them mundanes or muggles, Between the Worlds has affectionately termed these non-Pagans as "Derwoods" – a nod to Darrin from Bewitched.

Activities included a "No-Talent Show"; a Dionysian ritual / party known as Komos; and the Between the World Players produc-



Mel and two friends from Virginia Beach strike a pose at Between the Worlds 2017.

tion of “Butt Pirates of Zika Island.” The play is alleged to be a lost work of Gilbert and Sullivan. The play was both a comedy and a tragedy of epic proportions. Keynote speaker, Kirk Thomas, was the star of the show in the role of the Pirate Queen. The story involved wayward pirate women, a cabin boy dressed like Jack Sparrow, a curse, mutant babies, a giant mosquito, and mutiny.

Between the Worlds offered a wide variety of workshops. Topics included herbalism; sex magick; connecting with ancestors and deities; leather mask-making; hula dancing; tarot, runes, and other divination practices; polyamory; meditation and daily practices; flying ointments; Norse Seidhr oracles; Faery traditions; symbol and sigil design; and much more.

Other activities and rituals included a fire-lit labyrinth walk; a midnight meeting at the faerie shrine; a rite of passage for gay elders; a pirate themed ritual; fire divination; and a ritual to Hekate.

Overall, my week was a very enjoyable experience. There were a handful of folks I knew from other gatherings, and I was also surprised that two of my friends from Virginia Beach decided to attend. I also made new friends. Everyone was friendly and Between the Worlds encourages folks to leave the bar attitudes at home.

For more information on Between the Worlds, please visit: <http://www.betweentheworlds.org/>

Discovering Arcadia: An Eden of Male Love

by Mel Mystery.

Reprinted from Issue #1

What is Arcadia? Arcadia was an ancient Greek city with its own mythology and patron deities, but it was also the ideal of a homosexual utopia in European Renaissance literature.

Historic Arcadia was a region located in the central highlands on the Peloponnese peninsula in Greece. The Arcadian tribe that originally settled the area is considered one of the oldest tribes to have settled in Greece. Because it was a remote, mountainous place, Arcadia was a cultural refuge. Its language and culture remained unique. Arcadia had numerous towns in both the mountains and in its fertile valleys. The landscape included mountains, forests, pastoral land, and rivers.

Arcadia was named after its first King, Arcus, who was a son of Zeus and Callisto. Both Arcus and Callisto are associated with bears and eventually were placed in the heavens as Ursa Major, the Big Bear, and Ursa Minor, the Little Bear. Arcadia was also the mythical home of deities such as the lustful Pan, the trickster Hermes, and King of the Gods, Zeus.

During the European Renaissance, Arcadia emerged as an ideal of unspoiled, remote, wilderness. It was further idealized by Uranian (their contemporary term for homosexual) men as a homosexual Eden or a utopia of male-male love. To these men, Arcadia was a metaphor for what homosexual life could be without the stigma and constraints of mainstream heterosexual society. They pictured Arcadia as a hidden and isolated leafy grove, a remote pastoral land, or even as an island far from the hustle and bustle and everyday cares of the mundane world. For them, Arcadia feeds the homosexual spirit. The love of men for men is natural there. It is even divinely sanctioned as a means to understand all that is good and beautiful. In Arcadia, homosexual love and sexuality is the ideal. It is noble, inspired, virtuous, and spiritually uplifting. Arcadia features untrodden paths, secluded spots, and hidden waters. There are rivers flowing through the land and the element of water purifies and enhances the innocence of the place. Rites of the sea, purification, and transformation by water are central to the rituals of life in Arcadia. Symbolic sexual consummation takes place in or near the water. These rituals celebrate male friendship, our mythologies, the union and consummation of lovers, coming together in a loving and sexual fraternity of men, and washing away any sense of guilt brought on by society at large. These rites often include offering gifts from nature and purification by water. The men of Arcadia are naturally nude, or at least they wear skimpy clothing. The climate is such that this is comfortable.

These Renaissance men idealized Arcadia as a place where homosexual sensibilities, love, and sexuality can be practiced without fear or punishment. In Arcadia, it is safe to come out and to be gay. In this Utopia of male love and sexuality, gay and bi men are free from the stigma and the “outlaw” status that society confers on us.

Some of my favorite photos from past Brotherhood by the Bog Retreats.



Help Us to Help You and Our Tribe of Queer Pagan Men

Where else can you find a publication geared toward your unique interests and experiences as a Queer Pagan man?

Submissions to Mysterious Ways are not only encouraged, they are vital to provide several voices to the content of this Cyberzine.

I usually start sending out requests across various social media about a month before the submission deadline, but you don't have to wait for my request to get your articles in. The submission deadline for the next issue is always listed in the current issue and I'm always happy to receive submissions anytime during that six month period. Mysterious Ways is published semi-annually. While there is usually a specific theme for each issue, submissions of a general nature are welcome too.

Please consider sharing your voice by sending in your articles, book reviews, event reviews, poetry, art, or anything else that might be relevant to Queer Pagan men. Don't forget to share information about your Queer Pagan Men's groups and events!!!

Submission deadline for the next issue of Mysterious Ways is December 15, 2025.

Queer Pagan Resources

Queer Pagan Men's Groups

Brotherhood of Cernunnos -- A Brotherhood of UK Gay Pagan Men.

FMI: <http://www.brotherhoodofcernunnos.org/>

Cern'osia -- An eclectic Neo-Pagan faith which focuses exclusively on the veneration and worship of the Celtic Horned God, Cernunnos. Although it could be adapted by anyone who worships the Horned One, it was designed primarily with the needs of a solitary Pagan man in mind.

FMI: <https://cernosia.webs.com/>

Ecclesia Antinoi — Devoted to the worship of Antinous, the lover of the Roman emperor Hadrian. Antinous was deified after his death and is worshiped by modern practitioners as a god of gay spirituality, youth, and beauty.

FMI: <http://www.antinopolis.org/>

Gay Druid Brotherhood — An international network for homosexual and bisexual men on the Druidic and Keltic inspired Pagan paths.

FMI: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/gaydruidbrotherhood/>

Green Faerie Grove — A brotherhood of queer men in Columbus, Ohio.

FMI: <http://greenfaeriegrove.org/>

The Minoan Brotherhood — A men's initiatory tradition of the Craft celebrating Life, Men Loving Men, and Magic in a primarily Cretan context, also including some Aegean and Ancient Near Eastern mythology.

FMI: <http://www.minoan-brotherhood.org/>

Radical Faeries — Generally we are gay men who look for a spiritual dimension to our sexuality. Many of us are healers of one kind or another. Our shared values include feminism, respect for the Earth, and individual responsibility rather than hierarchy. Many of us are Pagan (nature-based religion).

FMI: <http://www.radfae.org/>

The Unnamed Path — The Unnamed Path is a shamanic path for men who love men. The path focuses on four main parts—Magic and Prophecy, Shamanism, Energy Healing, and Deathwalking.

FMI: www.unnamedpath.com

Submission deadline for the next issue of Mysterious Ways is December 15, 2025.

Please consider sharing your articles, reviews, poetry, art, events, and announcements.

E-mail these to Mel at knightsofmatrix@gmail.com. Please put "Mysterious Ways" in the subject line.

Upcoming Retreats and Gatherings

September 8-13, 2025 — Between the Worlds: A spiritual gathering for men who love men held at Four Quarters Interfaith Sanctuary, Artemis, PA. FMI: <http://www.betweentheworlds.org>

September 25-28, 2025 — Gay Spirit Visions Fall Conference at the Mountain Retreat and Learning Center in Highlands, NC. FMI: <http://gayspiritvisions.org/annual-gatherings/>

November 14-16, 2025 — Brotherhood Beyond Borders. A virtual Retreat for Pagan men of all paths, backgrounds, and orientations. Theme is "Magick for Troubled Times." FMI: <https://www.olympuscampgroundresort.com/brotherhood-beyond-borders/>

Dates to be announced —

Spring 2026 — Arcadia Retreat for Queer Pagan Men. To be held at a campground in Virginia. Details TBA. FMI: www.olympuscampgroundresort.com/index.php/events/arcadia

Spring 2027 — Brotherhood by the Bog retreat for Pagan Men of all paths, backgrounds, and orientations. To take place in-person at First Landing State Park in Virginia Beach, VA. Details TBA. FMI: <https://www.olympuscampgroundresort.com/brotherhood-by-the-bog-main/>

Stone and Stang gathering for men who love men. FMI: <https://unnamedpath.org/stone-stang/>

Blogs and Podcasts for Pagan men who love men

A Path through the Woods — Blog by a gay, Pagan, polytheist who lives in Chicago — <https://www.adrianmoran.com/>

Discovering the Male Mysteries — Official webpage for Mel Mystery and the Discovering the Male Mysteries podcast for gay and bi Pagan men. — <http://www.melmystery.com/>

Enfolding.org — A blog by Phil Hine to discuss interests including Tantra, Queer Theory, Gender, History, and Occult Practice. — <http://enfolding.org/>

Faehaven — Based in Harrisburg, PA the community is forming in order to create a space where queers and their advocates can explore spirituality of all sorts and have a safe space to share among like-minded independent individuals. — <https://faehaven.wordpress.com/about/>

Walking the Unnamed Path — Discusses the teachings and techniques given to us by their Ancestors of MWLM, and laid out by their late founder Hyperion. They also discuss topics and ideas pertaining to queer Pagan men in general. — <https://unnamedpath.org/podcast/>

Witches Betwixt — Witches Betwixt is a collective of queer witches representing a wide variety of magical practices and spiritual paths. We release a 45+ minute episode bi-weekly in which we discuss various topics relevant to the experience of a queer witch. — <http://witchesbetwixt.buzzsprout.com/>

**Looking for a speaker for your next gathering, retreat, or other event?
Check out the Queer Pagan Speaker Directory online!**

<https://www.melmystery.com/queer-pagan-speaker-directory/>

Mysterious Ways

The Mysterious Ways Cyber-zine is produced and published by Mel Mystery.

Mel Mystery is host of the Discovering the Male Mysteries Podcast for Gay and Bi Pagan Men. He is also author of the book, "The Gay Guys Guide to Werewolves and other Man Beasts" and he has a few other books in the works

You can find out about Mel, listen to his podcast, and find out more about his books at: www.melmystery.com

Archive copies of this newsletter will also be kept on the site.

We need your support!!!

This paper is a community-based project. We're not charging for subscriptions. We're not accepting paid advertising. Those writing articles are not paid for their work. This paper is for the Queer Pagan Men's community and by the Queer Pagan Men's community.

If you think this paper is worthwhile, please consider helping us to thrive. We need folks to submit articles, artwork, poetry, reviews, and other content. We need folks to share this in Queer Pagan groups and social media groups. We need folks to print copies and share them in LGBTQ and Pagan spaces in their local communities.

Thank you for doing your part!!!

Next Issue: Embracing the Crooked Path: Queer & Elder Wisdom

As Queer men and as Pagans, we've all followed non-traditional journeys of self-discovery and embracing alternate spiritual paths. These journeys may have been anything but straight—both literally and metaphorically. While this publication is for those older, younger, and in-between, the focus of this coming issue will be on the elders within our communities. What have we learned? What are our challenges? How can we give our elders the respect they deserve? Must one always act one's age?

Any or all of these topics, and topics of general Queer Pagan interest, are suitable for submission to the next issue of Mysterious Ways. Don't forget to send us your "Stories from the Resistance."

Please send articles, reviews, original poetry, artwork, spells, and other submissions to Mel at knightsofmatrix@gmail.com by December 15, 2025. Be sure to put "Mysterious Ways Submission" in the subject line.

Submission Guidelines:

1. All submissions should be of interest to Queer Pagan Men and fit at least two of the criteria—Queer, Pagan, and Men.
2. All submissions (especially photography and artwork) should be rated PG-13 or less. Since this newsletter will be shared in social media groups and in Pagan shops where minors might have access, we'd rather err on the side of community standards—not that we necessarily agree with them all.
3. Most articles should be a typewritten page or less. We may consider longer articles based on relevance and content.
4. You retain ownership and/or copyright of any articles or artwork you submit. We are only providing a venue to share your work with the world.
5. We reserve the right to refuse any content for any reason; to make minor edits such as spelling, grammar, and formatting; or to send the content back to you for revision.
6. We will not accept content that is explicitly racist, sexist, homophobic, transphobic, ageist, body shaming, or that otherwise spreads hate, negativity, or misinformation about any population or subculture of people.